

CLAIMS

1. A method of sending network device instructions to a network device comprising:

receiving an application instruction generated by an application;

uploading proxy agent instructions derived from the application instructions to a mail server; and

confirming that the proxy agent instructions have been downloaded by a proxy agent.

2. A method of sending network device instructions to a network device as recited in claim 1 wherein the proxy agent instructions are substantially the same as the application instructions.

3. A method of sending network device instructions to a network device as recited in claim 1 further including encrypting the proxy agent instructions.

4. A method of sending network device instructions to a network device as recited in claim 1 further including authenticating the proxy agent instructions.

5. A method of sending network device instructions to a network device as recited in claim 1 further including determining the proxy agent that is associated with the network device.

6. A method of sending network device instructions to a network device as recited in claim 1 further including specifying the address of the proxy agent that is to execute the proxy agent instructions.

7. A method of sending network device instructions to a network device as recited in claim 1 wherein confirming that the instructions have been downloaded by a proxy agent includes receiving an acknowledgment from the proxy agent that the instructions have been received.

8. A method of sending network device instructions to a network device as recited in claim 1 wherein the mail server sends the proxy agent instructions to a proxy agent mail server from which the proxy agent may download the instructions.

9. A method of sending network device instructions to a network device as recited in claim 1 wherein the proxy agent downloads the instructions directly from the mail server.

10. A method of sending network device instructions to a network device as recited in claim 1 wherein the proxy agent instructions are associated with a session identifier.

11. A method of sending network device instructions to a network device as recited in claim 1 wherein the proxy agent instructions are associated with a session identifier and wherein the session identifier is used to identify the proxy agent instructions downloaded by the proxy agent.

12. A method of sending network device instructions to a network device as recited in claim 1 wherein the network device is behind a firewall.

13. A method of receiving network device instructions for a network device comprising:

downloading a message from a mail server, the message including the network device instructions;

authenticating the message; and

parsing the instructions.

14. A method of receiving network device instructions as recited in claim 13 wherein the network device instructions are derived from instructions generated by an application.

15. A method of receiving network device instructions as recited in claim 13 further including sending an acknowledgment that the instructions have been received.

16. A method of receiving network device instructions as recited in claim 13 further including executing the instructions and uploading results to the mail server.

17. A method of receiving network device instructions as recited in claim 13 further including managing a network according to the network device instructions.

18. A method of sending network device instructions to a network device as recited in claim 1 further including gathering network data according to the network device instructions and reporting the results.

19. A proxy agent manager for sending network device instructions to a network device comprising:

an application interface configured to receive an application instruction generated by an application; and

5 a mail server interface configured to upload proxy agent instructions derived from the application instructions to a mail server and configured to confirm that the proxy agent instructions have been downloaded by a proxy agent.

20. A network device for executing instructions from a remote manager comprising:

10 a mail server interface configured to download a message from a mail server, the message including the instructions;

a processor configured to authenticate the message and to parse the instructions.

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